113, 185, 427 Kerala AW11

[For information on tenancy reform legislation in Travancore-Cochin see 39: Patel, AW1 India, category 116, pp. 345-350.]

11: India G-4, 5 (1960-1961) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll

Cashewnut industry, by the very nature of the process involved, does not require much of capital equipment. Although the average size of cashewnut factories is about 400 workers per unit, capital requirements in the industry hardly exceed Rs. 200 per worker. Even the coir and cotton textile factories in Kerala use only the handlooms. Existence of handlooms within the precincts of textile factories is, in fact, a unique phenomenon in Kerala (especially the Malabar region). Only a dozen out of over 300 textile factories use modern equipment. Nowhere else in India can this be seen.

1.46 The contrast between a well-developed primary sector and a backward industrial sector is also brought out by comparative wage statistics for the two sectors. It has already been pointed out that in spite of a high degree of unemployment in the agricultural sector, the wage rates and average household earnings, though low, do not compare very unfavourably with the average for all-India. On the other hand, the average annual earnings of workers in factories covered by the Payment of Wages Act are only Rs. 736 per worker. As may be seen from the table below, this figure is one of the lowest in the whole of India.

AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS OF FACTORY EMPLOYEES, 1956

	Rs.
Andhra	595
Assam	1,326
Bihar	1,236
Bombay	1,415
Madhya Pradesh	982
Madras	950
Orissa	947
Punjab	991
Uttar Pradesh	1,014
West Bengal	1,142
KERALA	738

SOURCE: *Statistical Abstract of India* (1957-58).

Overhead Facilities

1.47 In respect of overhead facilities, Kerala is fortunately better placed than many other parts of India. This has been the result of a progressive policy followed by the Governments of the erstwhile States of Travancore and Cochin, whose rulers took an active interest in the development of various public amenities and tried to attract industrialists from other parts of India to invest in Kerala.

1.48 In the sphere of transport, the coverage of Railways is rather limited, total route mileaghe being only 543 miles. This is, however, more than compensated by the wide network of roadways, which in spite of its many drawbacks, is superior to that in most other parts of India. The extent of road mileage per 100 square miles as well as the vehicle density in Kerala are the highest in the country. Road transport is, in general, more suited to conditions prevailing in Kerala than Railways because of the uneven nature of the terrain.

11: India G-4, 5 (1960-1961) 1962 AWII Kerala AWII

of paddy. This would not only give additional production of pulses which are deficit in the State, but also enrich the soil by leaving a nitrogen residue, and thereby constitute a better rotation. It may be possible to develop pulse crops on 250,000 acres. Assuming an yield of a quarter ton per acre, the additional production of pulses by crop intensification, as suggested here, would be roughly 62,500 tons per year.

2.74 Better plant protection is another measure for getting a substantial increase in yields. It is estimated that yields increase approximately by about 10 per cent through this method. The Department of Agriculture should tackle this problem more effectively. This would only be possible by strengthening the Plant Protection Wing of the Department of Agriculture.

Implements

2.75 Agricultural implements in use in the State are antiquated and inefficient. The wooden plough continues to be the master implement and is used for tillage operations of almost all the crops. Iron ploughs and other tillage implements are not popular. In fact the number of iron ploughs decreased by 22 per cent during 1951-56 and at present stands at 10,225. Tractors during the same period, however, increased from 59 to 187. Irrigation pumps too have shown an increase of 116 per cent.

2.76 The slow adoption of improved implements is mostly due to non-availability of implements and machinery suited to local conditions as well as due to their high cost. The topographical conditions and techniques of cultivation are unique in Kerala and there are no implements designed and developed to suit such conditions. There is, therefore, need for developing efficient implements for rice cultivation, plantation crops, soil conservation work and also for specialized implements such as ridgers and earthers for ginger and tapioca. It would be necessary to have a well equipped and adequately staffed agricultural engineering station to undertake the type of work suggested here. The proposed station may also do some work in designing of irrigation aids and may advise farmers on the selection of pumping sets and cane crushers.

Soil Erosion

2.77 Soil erosion is a serious problem in Kerala. Conditions prevalent in the State such as lateritic soils, undulating to steep topography, the system of farming followed and heavy cloud burst—all these constitute towards excessive soil erosion. There is no reliable estimate regarding the extent of area affected or vulnerable to soil erosion, but it is estimated that about one-third of the cultivated area—approximately 1.5 to 2 million acres—is affected by it. It should be possible to protect at least one million acres through soil conservation measures by 1971.

2.78 Soil conservation work as carried out by the Department of Agriculture has become very popular with the farmers. The Department gives technical advice on soil conservation matters and undertakes operations in specified areas in water-shed units.

11: India G-4,5 (1960-1961) 1962 AWII Kerala AWII

134 units. Actual cost is borne by the beneficiaries because the State recovers it by easy
185 instalments. The average cost of soil conservation is Rs. 150 per acre. The total cost of conserving one million acres at an average rate of Rs. 150 per acre would be
[464] Rs. 1.5 crores per year assuming that the programme is evenly phased. Soil conservation work is also very labour intensive and the proposed programme would give continuous employment to about 17,500 persons over the next 10-year period.

Related Aspects

*433 2.79 For full effectiveness, the development programme for agriculture, as
647 suggested above, would need a larger extension organization than that which was set up in 1953. It is expected to cover the whole of the State by the middle of the Third Plan period. The extension work at present is not intensive enough. The number of extension workers is too few to be really effective; the staff capacity needs to be augmented. In this connection the Agriculture Personnel Committee has recommended that the work in charge of a village level worker should be reduced by half. The Committee has also made suggestions on other aspects such as training and education, etc., of extension workers. The State Government may examine these proposals with a view to implementation as early as possible.

Marketing

*433 2.80 The small cultivators generally experience great difficulty in disposing of
442 their produce at reasonable prices. In case of some commodities like ginger, pepper
438 and arecanut, the difference between the price received by producers and that paid by consumers is as high as 100 per cent. In addition, none of the commodities except lemon grass is properly graded and this leads to serious consequences from the point of view of export markets. Marketing, processing and grading facilities should
[656] be developed so that both the producers as well as the consumers are benefited. In this context, as recommended by the Directorate of Marketing and Inspection, all the 41 wholesale markets in the State should be regulated. At present only four are regulated.

Agricultural Credit

*433 2.81 The average level of earning of farmers being rather low, most of them
452 require credit facilities for making improvements in their land. According to a survey, conducted in 1960 by the Bureau of Economic Studies, 89 per cent of the farmers need credit of some type. It also reveals that 82 per cent of the farmers need short term credit while medium and long term credit are needed by 56 and 34 per cent of farmers respectively. On the basis of the findings of the survey, the annual agricultural credit needs for the whole State may be put at 32.8 crores, of which Rs. 18.67 crores would be in the nature of short term credit, Rs. 6.74 crores medium term credit and Rs. 6.5 crores long term credit. The garden crops would account for Rs. 21.6 crores and paddy Rs. 11.2 crores.